

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson***Viewpoints on Homeland Security:  
A Discussion with the WMD Commissioners*

April 21, 2010 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “Viewpoints on Homeland Security: A Discussion with the WMD Commissioners”:

“Today, we are privileged to be joined by Senator Bob Graham and Senator Jim Talent, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the “Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism.”

It is disturbing to think that as we meet today, America’s adversaries are seeking weapons of mass destruction that could kill large numbers of our citizens and inflict great harm to our nation. But that is the reality.

In 2008, the World At Risk report, issued by the WMD Commission, brought into focus the seriousness of the threat and need to confront it with purpose and speed.

As the author of H.R. 1, the “Implementing 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act,” I am proud to have played a part in establishing the Commission.

Specifically, Title 18 of that comprehensive homeland security law authorized the establishment of a bipartisan commission to study the threat that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses to our country.

Notably, the law directs the Commission to give “particular attention” to Federal efforts to secure nuclear materials around the world from terrorists and states of concern.

In the World At Risk report, the Commissioners did not mince words about the WMD threat.

Specifically, the Commission stated that it believes that “unless the world community acts decisively and with great urgency, it is more likely than not that a WMD will be used in a terrorist attack somewhere in the world by the end of 2013.”

The Commission concluded that since a biological weapon can more easily be obtained and used by a terrorist than a nuclear weapon, the government needs to move “more aggressively to limit the proliferation of biological weapons and reduce the prospect of a bioterror attack.”

In January 2010, Senators Graham and Talent issued a report card that assessed the government’s progress toward implementing their 13 recommendations.

They gave an “F” to the Federal government for “failure to enhance the nation’s capabilities for rapid response to prevent biological attacks from inflicting mass casualties.”

Another “F” was for a lack progress on reforming congressional oversight “to better address intelligence, homeland security, and crosscutting 21st-century national security missions.”

Given your extensive credentials, Senators, your insights into what we need to do to fix congressional oversight are particularly welcome.

As you know, we are currently working on bipartisan legislation to improve domestic capabilities to prevent, deter, detect, attribute, respond to, and recover from WMD attacks in general, and based on your recommendations, biological attacks, in particular.

The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Pascrell, together with the Ranking Member, Mr. King, are collaborating on this legislation, which should be introduced in the next few weeks.”

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